

Add Fall Services To Boost Revenue And Retain Labor



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It's encouraging that property owners and managers are now more interested in maintaining their properties in better conditions than they did a few years ago. This is an invitation for contractors to ramp up their fall service programs and increase sales before the end of the year. When the grass stops growing, there's plenty to do that can change a regular year into an excellent year.

Our industry is a service industry, and what we do best is provide landscape services. Suggesting additional services to clients is good business and could keep the competition away. Unless you are so busy that you can't add more work to the schedule, look at each client's property and see what you could do to add services that would enhance their properties. And if you really have all the work you can handle, maybe you should plan to add a crew or two next year.

Fall ahead or fall behind

Besides leaf removal and mulch services, there are lots of services to recommend to clients in the fall. Reseeding, aeration, irrigation system winterization, fall color changes and general property enhancements are just a few additional services that can add work and revenue this fall. Sometimes the solutions to our profitability issues are right there just waiting for our attention. In many areas of the country, this is the aeration and reseeding season. In other areas, it's scalping time. In all areas, it's trimming, pruning and stump removal season. I believe it's hard to be all things service-wise to all clients, but we're landscape contractors and we should be experts in most areas of landscape service. Sure, large tree removal or installation may not fit your area of expertise, but find the services you can add and make sure clients know you can provide those services. Many times, I see contractors letting a competitor perform work

they could do, and that's just not good business.

Think outside the box

Adam Linnemann, president of Linnemann Lawn Care in Columbia, Illinois, recently started offering two sizes of porch planters to his clients. According to Linnemann, "the porch planters have helped increase our fall and winter revenue." Linnemann offers porch planters for all four seasons. They make great Mother's Day gifts or sympathy gifts, and they keep on giving all year long when clients buy the subscription. Another unique service Linnemann offers is trash can cleaning and disinfecting. "This service involves picking up, cleaning and delivering the cans back," Linnemann says. He is thinking outside of the box, and it's helping grow his business. Are you thinking outside of the box?



Train to gain

You may feel unqualified to offer some fall seasonal landscape services. This is where training can help add to your service offerings while increasing employee competency and productivity. The business is what you and your employees make of it. Take action to increase your service offerings and grow the business. Training is the first and most important thing you can offer employees. The National Association of Landscape Professionals offers training and certification in all segments of the green industry. A trained employee is a better employee. Training is a low-cost, high-benefit opportunity to add services, build employee morale and add dollars to your bottom line. Don't let chemical certification prevent you from doing fertilizing, lawn care or pest control if you see these services as profit builders. Get the training and certifications needed so your employees are experts in these areas.

Rethink your fall cleanup strategy

What you actually do when providing fall cleanup is important. If it's just leaf removal, that's a good start, but you're missing out on business. Bed revitalization, enhancements and tree and shrub replacements all add sales volume. Never think a client won't want to hear your suggestion about adding colorful plants or shrubs to his or her landscape. Maybe a couple of years ago that was true, but now businesses are moving forward with all types of projects and investments. This is not to say things are thriving economically, but they are better than they were a few years ago.

I hear many contractors say they can't find good help. One of our industry's challenges is year-round employment or lack thereof. Increase your fall services to meet this challenge. While you're working on fall services, those of you in the cold-weather areas should tie fall and winter services together, especially since this past year was a good year for snow services.

Look at your client list and find properties you could improve by performing additional services. Don't let a competitor get work you should be

performing. Take advantage of our somewhat improving economy to grow your business.